

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed 1 July 2004, the Examiner allowed claims 1-3, 5-15, 17 and 18; rejected claims 19 and 20; and merely objected to claims 4 and 16.

I. Amendments

The present amendment amends claims 16, 19, and 20. The non-narrowing amendment to claim 16 is cosmetic in nature and merely improves syntax of the claim. The scopes of claims 19 and 20 have been generally broadened by eliminating aspects of the last subparagraph.

II. Objections under 37 CFR § 1.75(c)

The Examiner objected to claims 4 and 16 as improper dependent claims, contending that they fail to further limit the subject matter of the claims from which they depend. As the Examiner notes, claim 4 states the relative order of removing the first virtual electrode unit and installing the second virtual electrode unit in its place. Claim 1 notes that the virtual electrodes in the first and second set occupy different relative positions. Depending on the relative configurations of the virtual electrode units and how they are fitted to the remainder of the processing chamber, it may be possible to install the second unit then remove the first unit. As claim 4 excludes this possibility from its scope, claim 4 properly limits claim 1. An analogous argument may be made with respect to claim 16.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 19 and 20 have been amended to clarify their respective meanings. The undersigned trusts that these amendments address the Examiner's concerns. If not, the undersigned asks the Examiner to call him to discuss appropriate changes to the claims. As this is the sole basis for rejecting claim 20, claim 20 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

IV. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claim 19 is rejected as anticipated by US Patent 5,368,711 ("Poris"). Poris illustrates a various aspects of an electrodeposition system in Figures 9-12, which are discussed at column 8, line 38 – column 11, line 31. In this system, a single "virtual electrode" 7 is sealed in position in the cell body 10. The Examiner notes that Poris mentions the possibility of manipulating aspects of the virtual anode to optimize current distribution at column 10, lines 49-51. It appears, however, that Poris contemplates but a single opening positioned concentrically with the cell body 10.

Claim 19 refers to a first virtual electrode unit defining at least two first virtual electrodes and a second virtual electrode unit that defines at least two second virtual electrodes. The first virtual electrodes and second virtual electrodes have different positions relative to the electrochemical processing chamber. This is neither taught nor suggested by Poris. Consequently, the undersigned respectfully submits that claim 19 is patentable over Poris.

V. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the claims pending in the application comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and patentably define over the applied art. A Notice of Allowance is, therefore, respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-3258.

Respectfully submitted,
Perkins Coie LLP

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